

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of the claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claim 1 (currently amended): An immunogenic conjugate comprising a *Bacillus* ~~capsular~~ a synthetic homopolymer polypeptide of poly- $\gamma$ -glutamic acid ( $\gamma$ PGA) polypeptide covalently linked to a carrier, wherein the conjugate elicits an immune response in a subject.

Claim 2 (currently amended): The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the conjugate comprises a  $\gamma$ PGA polypeptide comprising ~~4-20~~ 5-20 glutamic acid residues.

Claim 3 (original): The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the conjugate comprises a  $\gamma$ PGA polypeptide comprising 10-15 glutamic acid residues.

Claim 4 (original): The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the conjugate comprises a decameric  $\gamma$ PGA polypeptide.

Claim 5 (original): The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the carrier is selected from the group consisting of: (a) bovine serum albumin, (b) recombinant *B. anthracis* protective antigen, (c) recombinant *P. aeruginosa* exotoxin A, (d) tetanus toxoid, (e) diphtheria toxoid, (f) pertussis toxoid, (g) *C. perfringens* toxoid, (h) hepatitis B surface antigen, (i) hepatitis B core antigen, (j) keyhole limpet hemocyanin, (k) horseshoe crab hemocyanin, (l) edestin, (m) mammalian serum albumins, (n) mammalian immunoglobulins, analogs or mimetics of (a)-(n), and combinations of two or more thereof.

Claim 6 (original): The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the carrier comprises recombinant *B. anthracis* protective antigen.

Claim 7 (canceled).

Claim 8 (currently amended): The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the *Bacillus-capsular* poly- $\gamma$ -glutamic acid ( $\gamma$ PGA) polypeptide comprises the D- or L-conformation.

Claim 9 (currently amended): The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the *Bacillus-capsular* poly- $\gamma$ -glutamic acid ( $\gamma$ PGA) polypeptide comprises a *B.-anthracis*  $\gamma$ DPGA polypeptide.

Claim 10 (currently amended): The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the *Bacillus* poly- $\gamma$ -glutamic acid ( $\gamma$ PGA) polypeptide comprises a decameric *B.-anthracis*  $\gamma$ DPGA polypeptide and the carrier comprises recombinant *B. anthracis* protective antigen.

Claim 11 (currently amended): The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the carrier is covalently linked to either the amino or carboxyl terminus of the *Bacillus-capsular* poly- $\gamma$ -glutamic acid ( $\gamma$ PGA) polypeptide.

Claim 12 (currently amended): The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the carrier is covalently linked to the *Bacillus-capsular* poly- $\gamma$ -glutamic acid ( $\gamma$ PGA) polypeptide via a thioether, disulfide, or amide bond.

Claim 13 (currently amended): The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the density of *Bacillus* poly- $\gamma$ -glutamic acid ( $\gamma$ PGA) polypeptide to carrier is between about 5:1 and about 32:1.

Claim 14 (currently amended): The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the density of *Bacillus* poly- $\gamma$ -glutamic acid ( $\gamma$ PGA) polypeptide to carrier is between about 10:1 and about 15:1.

Claim 15 (original): The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the  $\gamma$ PGA polypeptide is covalently linked to the carrier via an aldehyde (CHO)/adipic acid hydrazide (AH) linkage.

Claim 16 (currently amended): A composition comprising the conjugate of ~~any one of claims 1-15~~ claim 1 and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

Claim 17 (original): The composition of claim 16, further comprising an adjuvant.

Claim 18 (original): A composition comprising the conjugate of claim 9 and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

Claim 19 (original): The composition of claim 18, further comprising an adjuvant.

Claim 20 (original): A method of eliciting an immune response against a *Bacillus* antigenic epitope in a subject, comprising introducing into the subject the composition of claim 17, thereby eliciting an immune response in the subject.

Claim 21 (original): The method of claim 20, wherein the immune response is elicited against the *Bacillus* capsular poly- $\gamma$ -glutamic acid ( $\gamma$ PGA) polypeptide.

Claim 22 (currently amended): The method of claim 20, wherein the immune response is elicited against the *Bacillus* capsular poly- $\gamma$ -glutamic acid ( $\gamma$ PGA) polypeptide and the carrier protein.

Claims 23-33 (canceled).

Claim 34 (new): An immunogenic conjugate comprising a *Bacillus* capsular poly- $\gamma$ -glutamic acid ( $\gamma$ PGA) polypeptide covalently linked to a carrier, wherein the carrier is selected from the group consisting of: (a) recombinant *B. anthracis* protective antigen, (b) recombinant *P. aeruginosa* exotoxin A, (c) tetanus toxoid, (d) diphtheria toxoid, (e) pertussis toxoid, (f) *C. perfringens* toxoid, (g) hepatitis B surface antigen, (h) hepatitis B core antigen, (i) keyhole limpet hemocyanin, (j) horseshoe crab hemocyanin, (k) edestin, (l) mammalian serum albumins, analogs or mimetics of (a)-(l), and combinations thereof, and wherein the conjugate elicits an immune response in a subject.

Claim 35 (new): The conjugate of claim 34, wherein the carrier comprises recombinant *B. anthracis* protective antigen.

Claim 36 (new): The conjugate of claim 34, wherein the *Bacillus* capsular  $\gamma$ PGA polypeptide comprises a *B. anthracis*, *B. licheniformis*, *B. pumilus*, or *B. subtilis*  $\gamma$ PGA polypeptide.

Claim 37 (new): The conjugate of claim 34, wherein the *Bacillus* capsular  $\gamma$ PGA polypeptide comprises the D- or L-conformation.

Claim 38 (new): The conjugate of claim 34, wherein the *Bacillus* capsular  $\gamma$ PGA polypeptide comprises a  $\gamma$ DPGA polypeptide.

Claim 39 (new): The conjugate of claim 34, wherein the carrier is covalently linked to either the amino or carboxyl terminus of the *Bacillus* capsular  $\gamma$ PGA polypeptide.

Claim 40 (new): The conjugate of claim 34, wherein the carrier is covalently linked to the *Bacillus* capsular  $\gamma$ PGA polypeptide via a thioether, disulfide, or amide bond.

Claim 41 (new): The conjugate of claim 34, wherein the *Bacillus* capsular  $\gamma$ PGA polypeptide is covalently linked to the carrier via an aldehyde (CHO)/adipic acid hydrazide (AH) linkage.

Claim 42 (new): A composition comprising the conjugate of claim 34 and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

Claim 43 (new): The composition of claim 42, further comprising an adjuvant.

Claim 44 (new): A method of eliciting an immune response against a *Bacillus* antigenic epitope in a subject, comprising introducing into the subject the composition of claim 43, thereby eliciting an immune response in the subject.

Claim 45 (new): The method of claim 44, wherein the immune response is elicited against the *Bacillus* capsular poly- $\gamma$ -glutamic acid ( $\gamma$ PGA) polypeptide.

Claim 46 (new): The method of claim 44, wherein the immune response is elicited against the *Bacillus* capsular poly- $\gamma$ -glutamic acid ( $\gamma$ PGA) polypeptide and the carrier.